

St Catherine's College Middle Common Room

Open Meeting Minutes

Sunday 24th January 2016
at 2000 in the MCR

In attendance:

45 MCR Members in total

Executive Committee Members Present:

Elizabeth Smethurst – Co-President (Meeting Chair)

Phil Earp – Secretary

Katharine Biddle – Treasurer

William Beuckelaers – Bar Manager

Matt Smith – Social Secretary

Julian Malisano – Social Secretary

Carla Verdi – Social Secretary

Christoph Dorn – IT Officer



Minutes taken by MCR Secretary, Phil Earp

I. General Announcements

A. Committee Elections

Elections for the regular and executive committee roles will occur in 4th Week (Sunday 7th February). Nominations are now open for all positions. To apply, send an email to the MCR Secretary (philip.earp@stcatz.ox.ac.uk) cc'ing in your two seconders. For co-presidents applying as a pair, each person needs to be seconded separately; by 4 different seconders in total.

Nominations will close next Sunday. Everyone is welcome to submit an A4 manifesto. Secretary is to distribute last year's manifestos for inspiration.

B. Hall Signup

The hall signup which was on the MCR website has now been moved to UPay. The JCR's separate system crashed, so instead we are now using a combined JCR-MCR system on UPay. You can sign up for both Scaf and Hall. Remember that signing up is appreciated, but you will still be able to get food if you forget to sign up.

C. Charity Auction

In week 8 we will be holding the MCR's annual charity auction. The money raised funds the MCR scholarship, which allows people to come and study at Catz who would normally not be able to afford to.

Items / services are offered in advance, and then these are given to the highest bidder. Last year the things on offer included dance lessons, language lessons, bike repair and having a cake baked for you! Please get signing up once the email comes round!

II. Proposed Amendment to MCR Constitution

The Proposed Constitutional Amendments would allow for 1 Social Secretary Position on the Executive Committee to be Reserved for an MCR member whose length of stay at Oxford is of a duration of no more than 12 months

Secretary's Note: *The motion was submitted to the MCR Secretary by Moctar Kané on Tuesday 12th January 2016, apparently seconded by Lakshmi Neelakantan and Arpita Mitra. An email was also received from Alice Wang, seconding the motion. The proposal was discussed at the Executive Committee Meeting on Monday 18th January.*

In conversation, William Beuckelaers discovered that Arpita had not agreed to second the proposal, and had only proof-read it. This raised suspicions that maybe neither of the original seconders had agreed to second the motion. William checked with them, and confirmed that Lakshmi and Alice did indeed agree to second the motion. Since only one seconder is needed to propose a constitutional amendment, there was

no issue with the motion being raised at an Open Meeting, so the Secretary added the item to the agenda of this Open Meeting, with Arpita removed from the list of seconders.

The motion was explained in brief by the Co-President, Elizabeth Smethurst.

Moctar then proposed the motion to the MCR. The key points in proposition were:

- This proposal will only affect one of the nine Executive Committee positions, and will give priority for this position to people on a course of less than 12 months.
- The constitution is currently unequal and is unfair to those who are on 1 year courses. This is unacceptable and discriminates against this portion of the MCR.
- We need to come together to promote fairness and justice in the MCR.
- Change is never easy; we need to act today in the spirit of tomorrow.

Moctar accuses William Beuckelaers of ‘going behind his back’ when asking his seconders about the proposal. Moctar mentions that ‘the checking of the seconders by the committee is not part of the MCR constitution’.

***Secretary’s Note:** Whilst it does not explicitly state that the committee should check the validity of the seconders, it is sensible that these are checked, especially if a member thinks that it is out-of-character for a certain person to second a motion. It would be unfair to the whole MCR if a proposal was submitted with a falsified secondment. In the future, this could be avoided if the person proposing a motion gets their seconders to separately email the Secretary with their secondment.*

Matt Smith gave an opposition to the motion, presenting issues raised during the discussion at the previous Executive Committee meeting. The key points in opposition were:

- The core idea, of getting people on 1 year courses involved in organising MCR events is a good one; this opposition is to the proposed solution.
- Since the proposed position would end at the end of Trinity Term, the committee would be down by one social secretary during Freshers’ week, the busiest time of the year.
- The Michaelmas term card needs organising in advance, over the summer vacation, so the proposed social secretary would not be able to help with this.
- When Matt was elected in Michaelmas Term, it was difficult for him to get up to speed, and he relied on the fact that he already knew the two remaining social secretaries well.
- In the past 3 years, people have dropped out in one form or another, so Michaelmas elections have taken place. If people who have already been at Catz for one year underestimate their workload and drop the role, then how can someone who has only just arrived in Oxford be expected to judge their workload correctly?

- The Social Secretaries are facilitators, not purely organisers. By having been in college for a longer time, they are in a suitable position to help ordinary MCR members to organise their own events. A newcomer to Oxford would not have the relevant experience (even if they have the physical ability to do the role) to facilitate the organisation of events effectively.
- Overall, this proposal would put unfair stress on both the existing committee members and the new member.

The meeting was opened up to Questions and Answers:

Q: If these duties would put extra stress on the remaining Social Secretaries, why couldn't an *extra* Social Secretary position be created for a person on a 1 year programme?

A: (Moctar): The basic problem is equality, and the lack of it in the current system.

A: (Matt): This would not be necessary; the role of the Social Secretaries is as a facilitator, and we need to encourage the organisation of events by regular members.

Q: (Katharine): People on 1-year courses can already apply to regular positions. Don't the executive roles require relevant experience?

A: (Moctar): Tonight we just had Tacos. When I joined, I worked hard for to get tacos in the MCR. Julian came into the position from October to Hilary, so experience should not qualify you.

Q: (Serkan): Don't you think that having Michaelmas to find out what a position entails, and find your workload, is a good thing so that you don't overcommit to things? I burnt out after 3 months of being social secretary!

A: (Moctar): Good question, but in reality I didn't even ask any of the social secretaries beforehand what the position entailed.

Q: (Priyanka): If you know nothing about the position, Oxford social life, nor the MCR, then how are you suitably qualified?

A: (Moctar): I made most of my friends in freshers' week, even though I didn't come to many events, so you can pick things up quickly.

A: (Statement in support of Moctar by Angelos): This college (and Oxford in general) has some of the most qualified students in the world, so it should be easy for any one of us to learn how to do this role.

A: (Matt): It is not a question of whether you are *capable* of the role, it is a question of whether you have the relevant experience for the role.

Q: Moctar, can you confirm that this motion is to reserve a single Social Secretary position?

A: (Moctar): Yes, we are giving priority for a single position to people on a course less than 12 months in length.

Q: (directed to Moctar) In the proposed elections, how do go about giving priority?

A: The positions would be open for application from anyone, but priority would be given to those on a course less than 12 months.

Q: (directed to Moctar) I'm on an MBA, and my course is 12 months and 10 days in length. Could I apply for the proposed position?

A: (Moctar) This proposal is all about equality, and is more equal than the current policy, [but no, you wouldn't be able to apply under the proposed rules].

Clarification of the amendment was asked for, so the proposed constitutional amendment was read out in full by the Co-President.

The motion was voted on by secret ballot. The votes were counted by the secretary, and double checked by John Kenny (who, as an Honorary Member, could not vote on this proposal)

The motion was not passed:

Shall the motion be passed?

No: 27 Votes

Yes: 9 Votes

Invalid/Spoiled Ballot: 1 Vote

III. Proposal for the flying of the Rainbow Flag

The JCR and MCR jointly request that the SLC resolve to commit to flying the LGBTQ rainbow flag above St Catherine's College porter's lodge for the duration of February (LGBTQ history month) each year, beginning in 2016.

The motion was read in full by the Co-President.

No questions were raised

The motion was approved by show of hands.

IV. Catz Exchange

Serkan reminded us that the Catz Exchange is coming up soon. It combines a free dinner with education – email catzexchange@stcatz.ox.ac.uk to register your place.

V. Associate Membership Application

A. Emily Moss

Emily is the college Communications Officer, and a recent Oxford graduate. Her membership is automatically approved since she is a college officer.

Q: If you could be a combination of two animals, what would you be?

A: A cheetah, because it is the fastest on earth. And a horse, since they are strong, pretty and well looked after. So, the body of a cheetah and the neck and face of a horse.

B. Martin Jönsson

Martin is a PhD student from the University of Copenhagen, and originally from Sweden. Besides research he enjoys hiking and hunting (although not in Oxford!). He hopes to get involved in MCR events and sports

Q: If you could be a combination of two animals, what would you be?

A: Definitely a fox, since they always manage to get away in a hunt! Not sure about the other animal!

His membership was approved by a show of hands.

VI. AOB

No other business raised.